AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete, marked-up listing of revised claims with a status identifier in parenthesis, underlined text indicating insertions, and strike through and/or double-bracketed text indicating deletions.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A filter for filtering electronic messages, said filter comprising:

– storage space for an allowed list having identification insignias of senders which have been approved for sending messages to a recipient,

– means for receiving a first message from a sender,

– means for capturing from the first message a first identification insignia of the sender,

– means for capturing from the first message a first identification insignia of the recipient,

– first check means for comparing the first identification insignia of the sender with the allowed list for determining either to withhold the first message or to forward the first message to the recipient,

– means for storing the first message and the first identification insignia of the sender,

– first prioritizing means which assigns a priority to each of the first identification insignias of the senders of the first message,

- first means for selecting the first identification insignias and adding the selected identification insignias to the allowed list and delivering the first message to the intended recipients, wherein the first means for selecting are adapted to carry out the selection according to the priorities assigned to the first identification insignias of the sending of the first messages,

- means for generating a return message to the sender in case the first identification insignia of the sender is not included in the allowed list, the means for returning the first message being adapted to include in the returned message a unique code, and a message for the sender to reply to the returned message by sending the returned message back without changing the unique code,

- means for storing the unique code and relating the unique code to the first identification insignia of the sender, and

- second check means for receiving a second message and for recognizing the second message being a reply to the returned message,

wherein the filter further includes:

- second prioritizing means which, in response to recognition of the second message being a reply to the returned message, assigns a priority to each of the identification insignias of the senders of the returned messages, and

- second means for selecting identification insignias and adding the selected identification insignias to the allowed list, wherein the second means for selecting are adapted to carry out the selection according to the priorities assigned to the identification insignias of the sending of the returned messages.

2. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, wherein the second check means performs the recognition by:

- capturing in the second message the unique code, and a second identification insignia of the sender of the second message, and

- checking that the unique code has not changed, and that the second identification insignia corresponds to the first identification insignia.

3. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising means for capturing from a server a list including at least one address from which the sender has access to send messages from.

4. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 3, further comprising means for checking that the sender is sending from the at least one address included in the allowed list.

5. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising means for generating a predict allowed list including identification insignias of third party message recipients included by the sender in the first message or the second message.

6. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising rule based selection means which, based on recognition of a specific pattern in a content of the message sets the priority of the identification insignias.

7. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising means for automatically selecting identification insignias of the senders with priorities above a predetermined value for the allowed list.

8. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, wherein the identification insignias of the senders and a data identifying the sender include at least a domain identification of the sender's electronic mail address.

9. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising means for withholding the first message from final delivery to the intended recipient until an administrator has accepted delivery of the message to the recipient, the administrator being one of a human administrator, a software-implemented administrator, and the recipient of the first message.

10. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising storage for a black-list, and means for checking occurrence of the identification insignias in the black-list prior to comparing the identification insignias with the allowed list.

11. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 10, further comprising means for communicating, in a Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) message, and in response to receiving the first message from a sender with an identification insignia not included in the allowed list or optionally, with an identification insignia included in the black-list, that the first message could not be delivered to the recipient.

12. (Currently Amended) A filter according to claim 11, further comprising a counting device ~~counting means~~ for counting a number of reoccurrences of identical messages being received, and for adding the first identification insignia of the sender of such messages which reoccur more than a pre-specified number of times to the black-list.

13. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising means for adding to the allowed list, identification insignias of potential senders to whom the recipient has previously been sending messages.

14. (Currently Amended) A filter according to claim 1, further comprising a measuring device ~~means~~ for measuring a frequency of messages to and from a specific sender, and upon detection of frequencies above a pre-specified level, for forwarding the first message to the recipient irrespective if the first identification insignia of the sender is not in the allowed list.

15. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 1, wherein the means for generating a return message to the sender is adapted to send the return message by use of an identification insignia corresponding to the first identification insignia of the intended recipient of the first message.

16. (Previously Presented) A method for filtering electronic messages, said method comprising:

- assigning space in a computer system for an allowed list having identification insignias of senders which have been approved for sending messages to a recipient,

- receiving a first message from a sender,

- capturing from the first message a first identification insignia of the sender,

- capturing from the first message a first identification insignia of the recipient,

- comparing the first identification insignia of the sender with the allowed list for determining either to withhold the first message or to forward the first message to the recipient,

- storing the first message and the first identification insignia of the sender in a storage space of the computer system,

- assigning a priority to each of the first identification insignias of the senders of the first messages,

- selecting first identification insignias of the senders of the first messages and adding the selected identification insignias to the allowed list, wherein the selecting is carried according to the priorities assigned to the first identification insignias of the senders of the first messages,

- generating a return message to the sender in case the first identification insignia of the sender is not included in the allowed list, and including in the returned message a unique code, and a message for the sender to reply to the return message by sending the returned message back without changing the unique code,

- storing the unique code and relating the unique code to the first identification insignia of the sender, and

- receiving a second message and recognizing the second message being a reply to the returned message,

wherein:

- in response to recognition of the second message being a reply to the returned message, assigning a priority to each of the identification insignias of the senders of the returned messages, and

- selecting identification insignias of the senders of the returned messages and adding the selected identification insignias to the allowed list, wherein the selecting is carried according to the priorities assigned to the identification insignias of the senders of the returned messages.

17. (Previously Presented) A filter for filtering electronic messages, said filter comprising:

- storage space for an allowed list having identification insignias of senders which have been approved for sending messages to a recipient,

- a device for receiving a first message from a sender,

- a device for capturing from the first message a first identification insignia of the sender,

- a device for capturing from the first message a first identification insignia of the recipient,

- a first check device for comparing the first identification insignia of the sender with the allowed list for determining either to withhold the first message or to forward the first message to the recipient,

- a device for storing the first message and the first identification insignia of the sender,

- a first prioritizing device which assigns a priority to each of the first identification insignias of the senders of the first message,

- a first device for selecting the first identification insignias and adding the selected identification insignias to the allowed list and delivering the first message to the intended recipients, wherein the first device for selecting are adapted to carry out the selection according to the priorities assigned to the first identification insignias of the sending of the first messages,

- a device for generating a return message to the sender in case the first identification insignia of the sender is not included in the allowed list, the device for returning the first message being adapted to include in the returned message a unique code, and a message for the sender to reply to the returned message by sending the returned message back without changing the unique code,

- a device for storing the unique code and relating the unique code to the first identification insignia of the sender, and

- a second check device for receiving a second message and for recognizing the second message being a reply to the returned message,

wherein the filter further includes:

- a second prioritizing device which, in response to recognition of the second message being a reply to the returned message, assigns a priority to each of the identification insignias of the senders of the returned messages, and

- a second device for selecting identification insignias and adding the selected identification insignias to the allowed list, wherein the second device for selecting is adapted to carry out the selection according to the priorities assigned to the identification insignias of the senders of the returned messages.

18. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 16, wherein the step of recognizing the second message being a reply to the returned message is further performed by:

- capturing in the second message the unique code, and a second identification insignia of the sender of the second message, and

- checking that the unique code has not changed, and that the second identification insignia corresponds to the first identification insignia.

19. (Previously Presented) A filter according to claim 17, wherein the second check device performs the recognition by:

- capturing in the second message the unique code, and a second identification insignia of the sender of the second message, and

- checking that the unique code has not changed, and that the second identification insignia corresponds to the first identification insignia.